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Brandeis

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(54) **TOOL HOLDER UNIT**

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A45F 5/02	(2006.01)
B25H 3/00	(2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC .. ***B25H 3/02*** (2013.01); ***A45F 5/02*** (2013.01); ***A45F 5/021*** (2013.01); ***B25H 3/006*** (2013.01); *A45F 2005/025* (2013.01); *A45F 2200/0575* (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC ... A45F 5/02; A45F 5/021; A45F 2200/0575; A45F 2205/025; B25H 3/02; B25H 3/006; Y10S 224/904

USPC 224/660, 666, 671, 904

See application file for complete search history.

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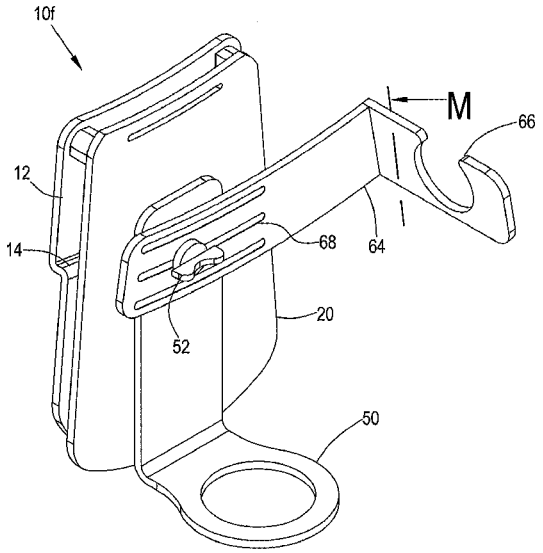
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A tool holder unit for attachment to a user's belt comprising an ergonomically-shaped base; an ergonomically-shaped front section attached at its top end to the ergonomically-shaped base, the ergonomically-shaped front section having means for insertion of at least one of a tool and tool accessories; and means for securing a user's belt between the ergonomically-shaped base and the ergonomically-shaped front section, such that the tool holder unit does not become displaced from the user's belt due to body motion by the user.

4 Claims, 11 Drawing Sheets



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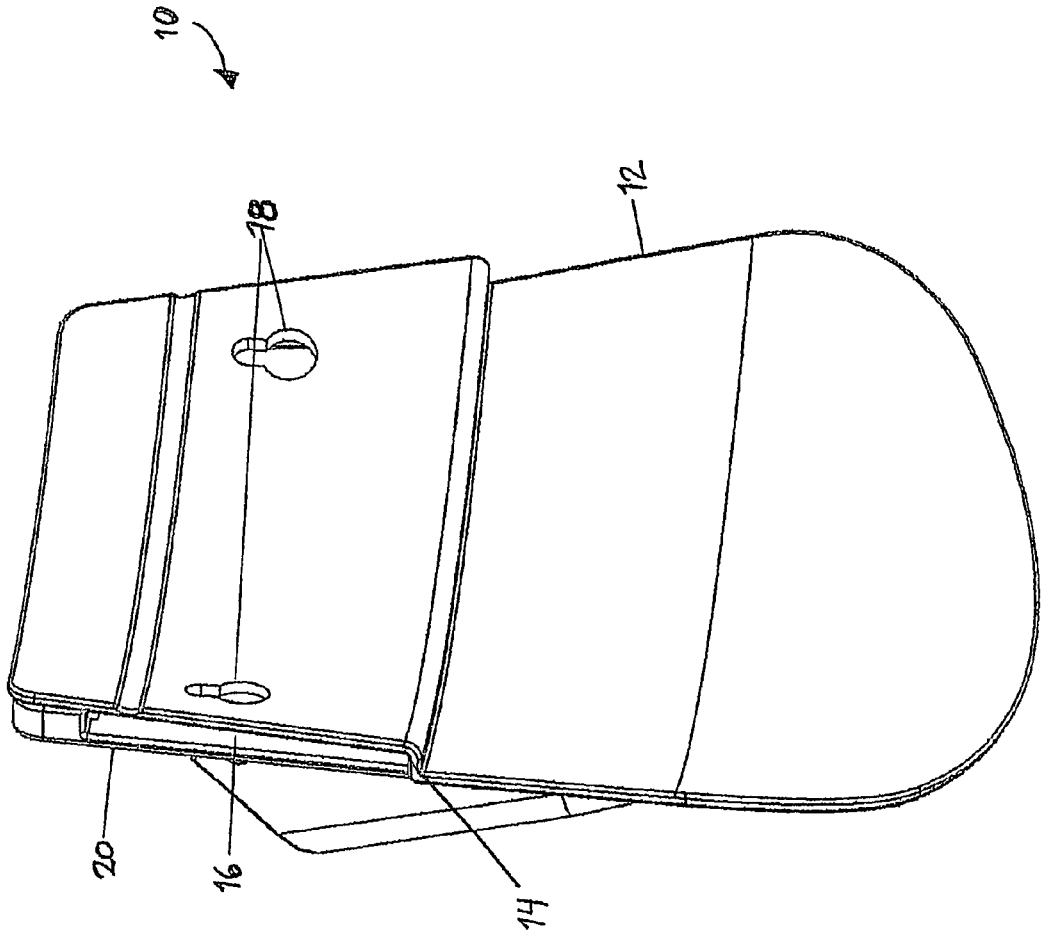


Fig. 1

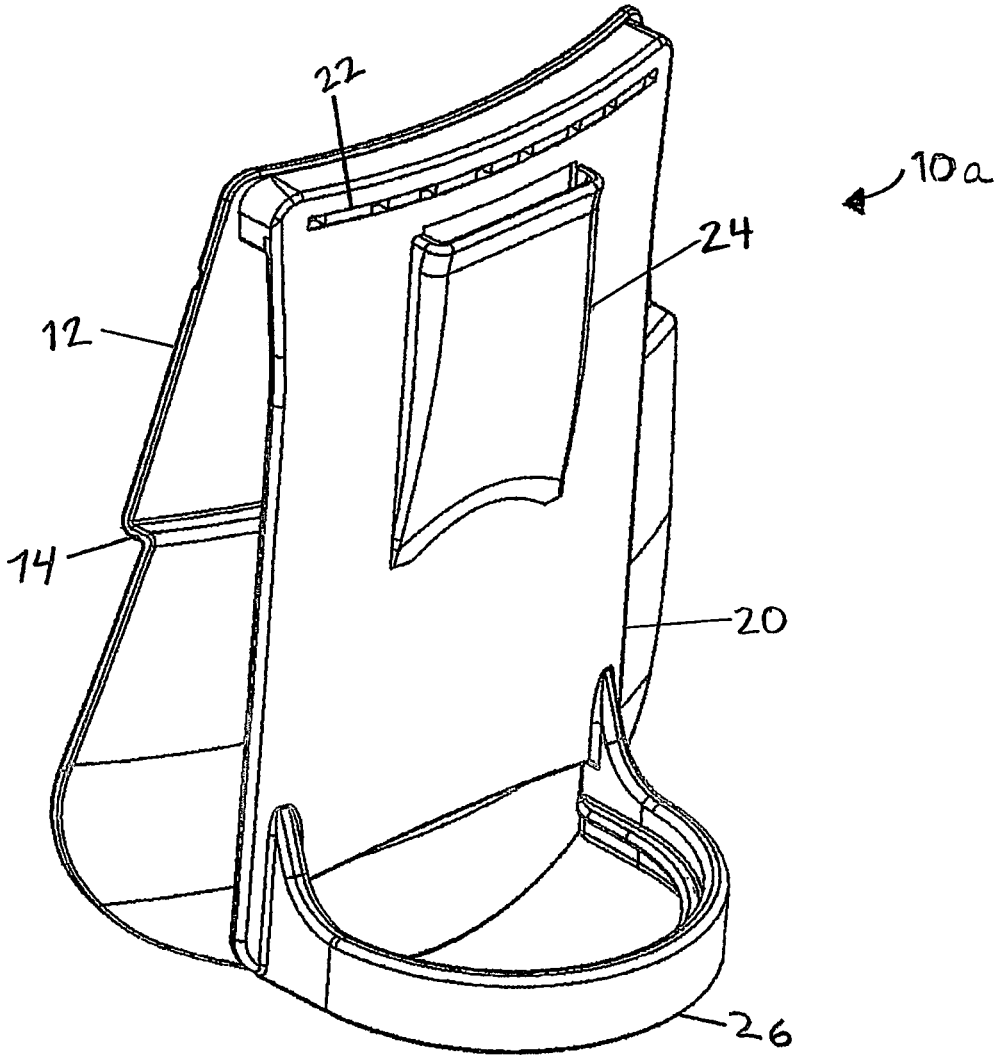


Fig. 2

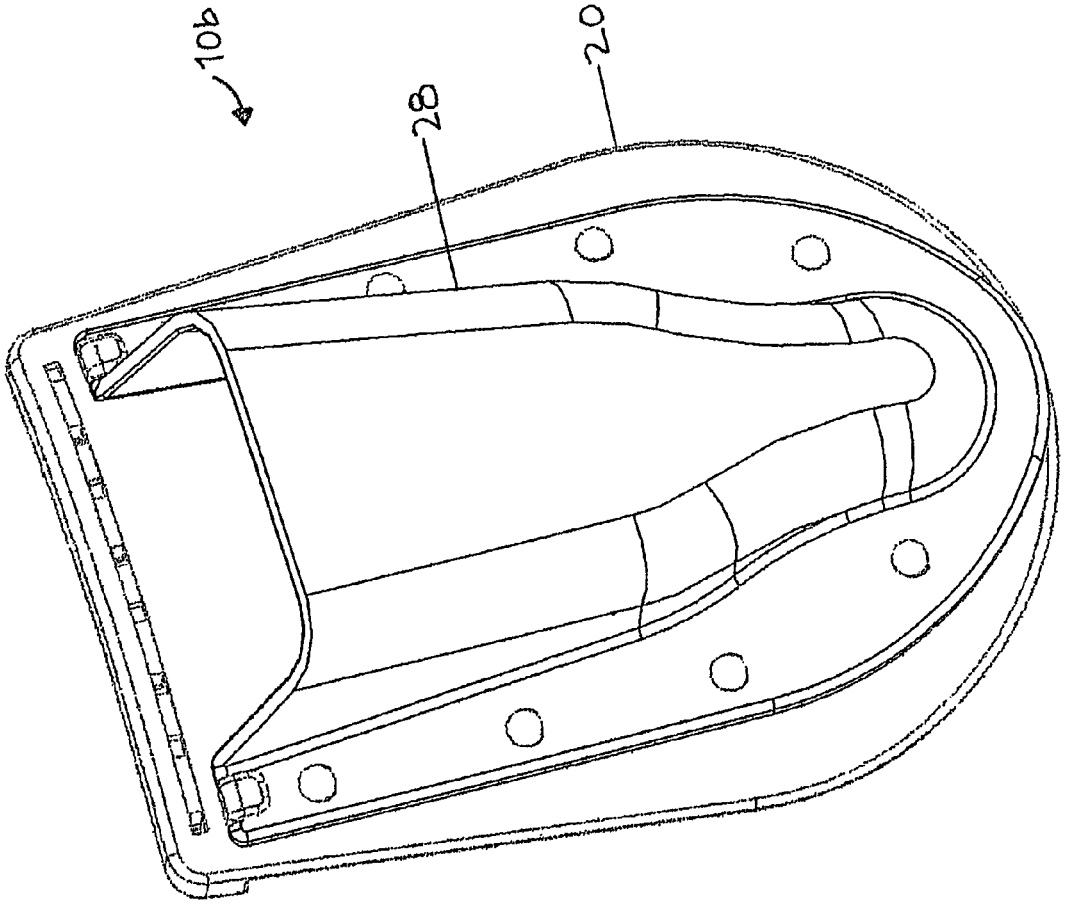


Fig. 3

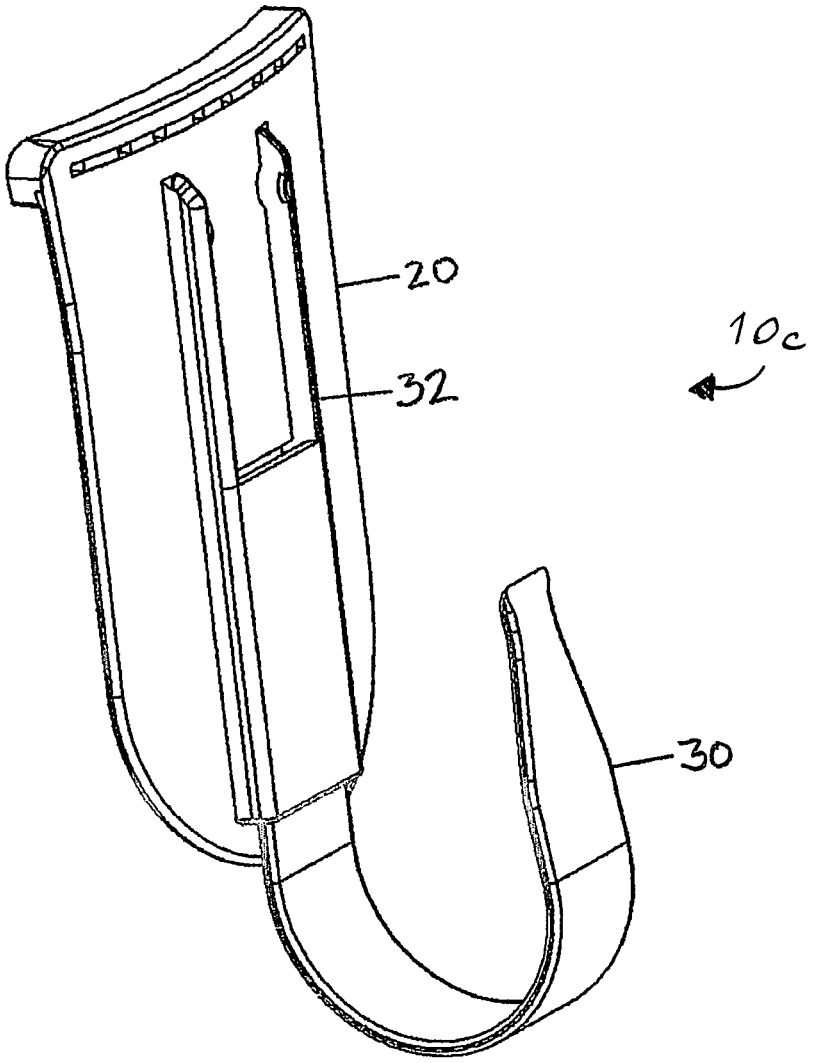


Fig. 4

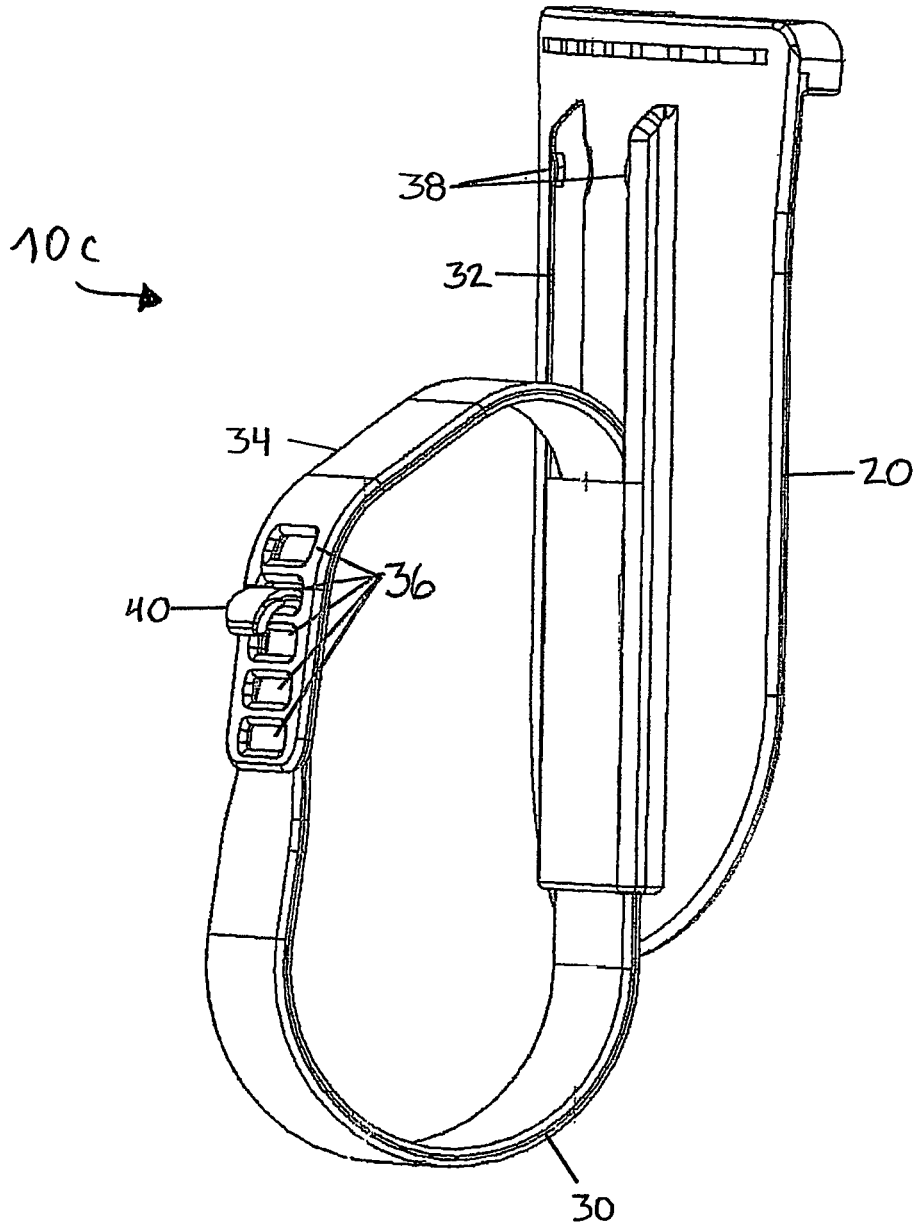
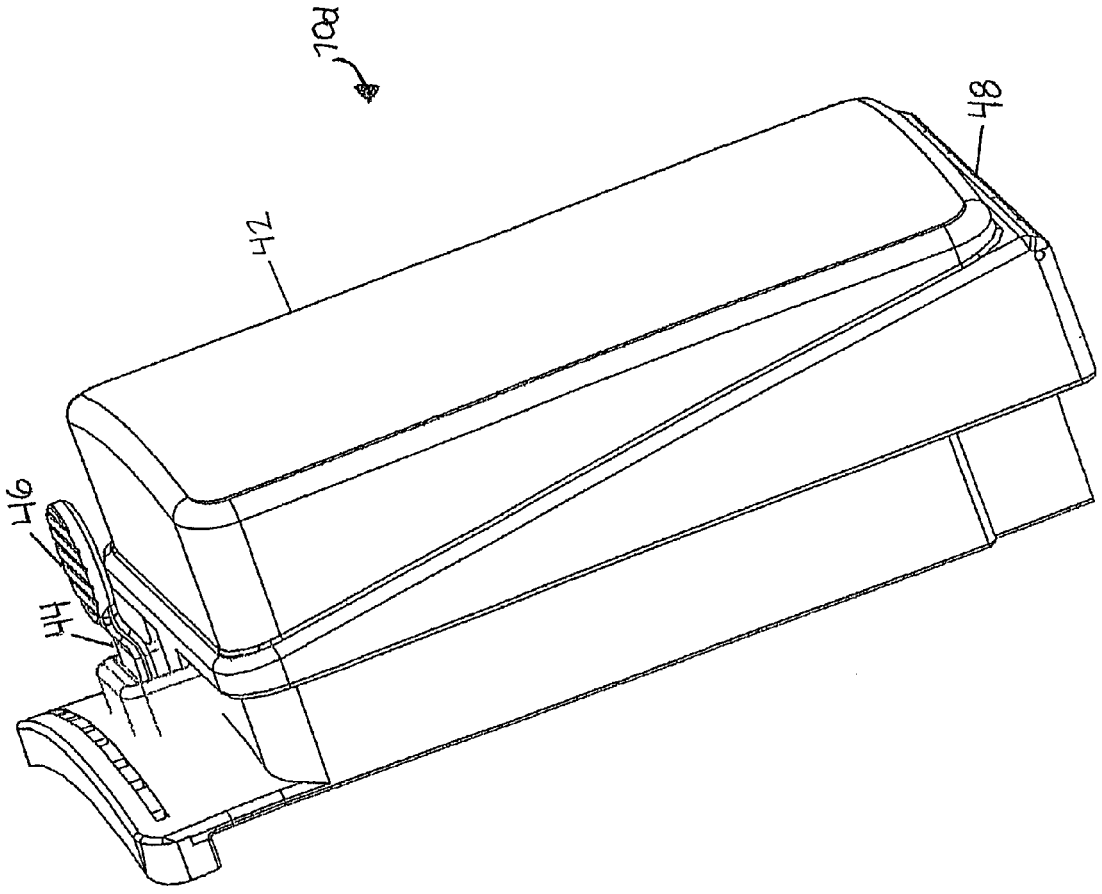


Fig. 5

Fig. 6



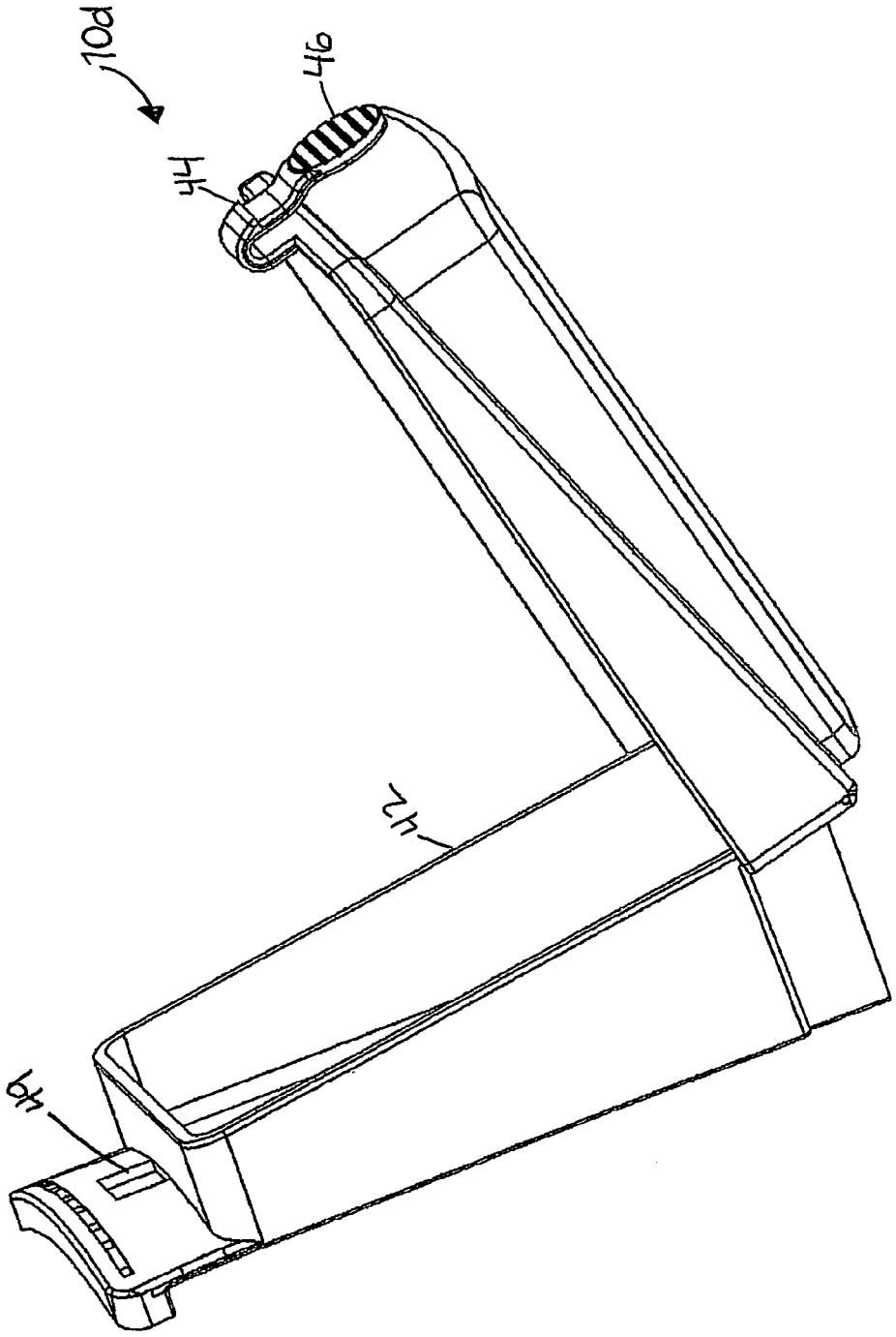


Fig. 7

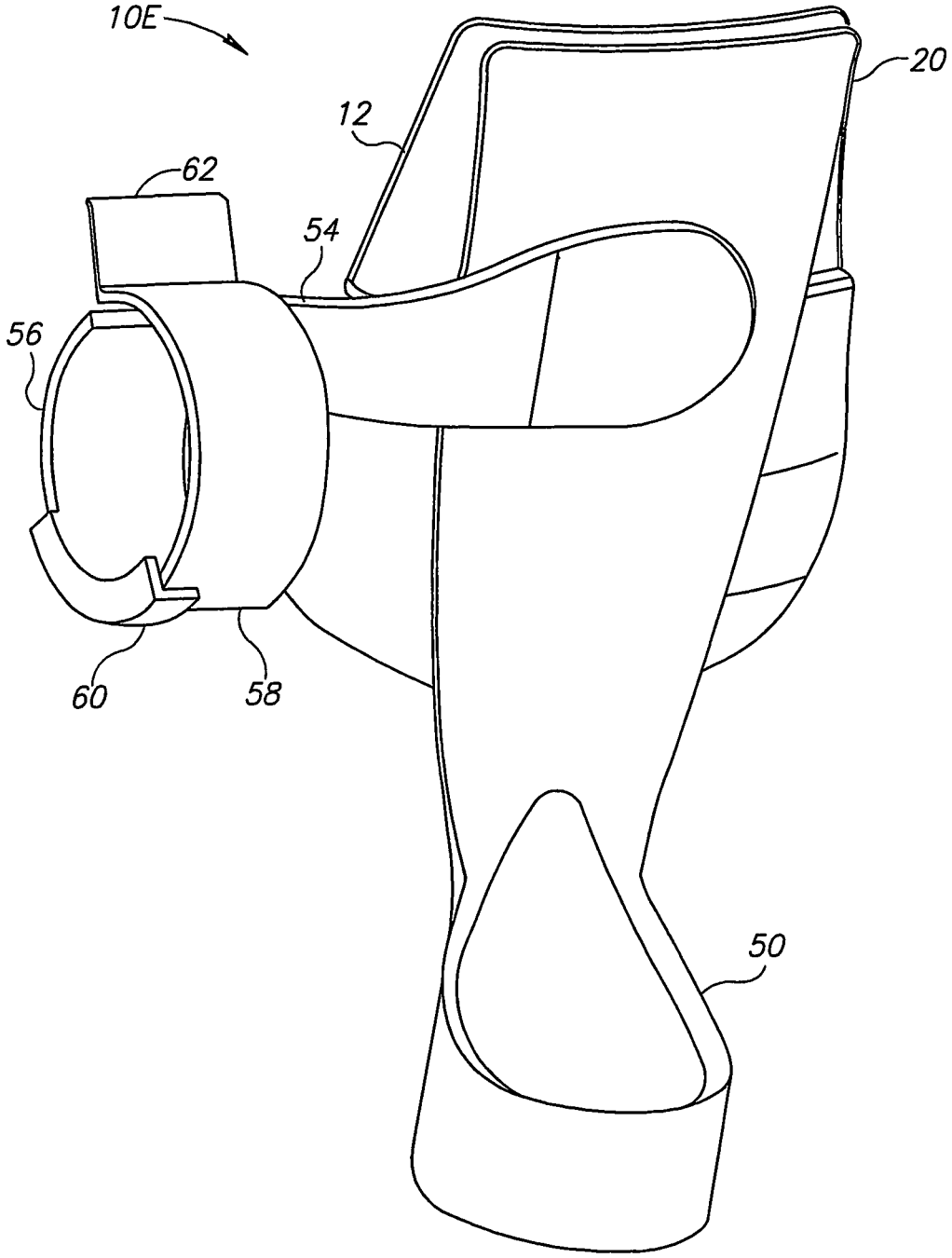


FIG.8

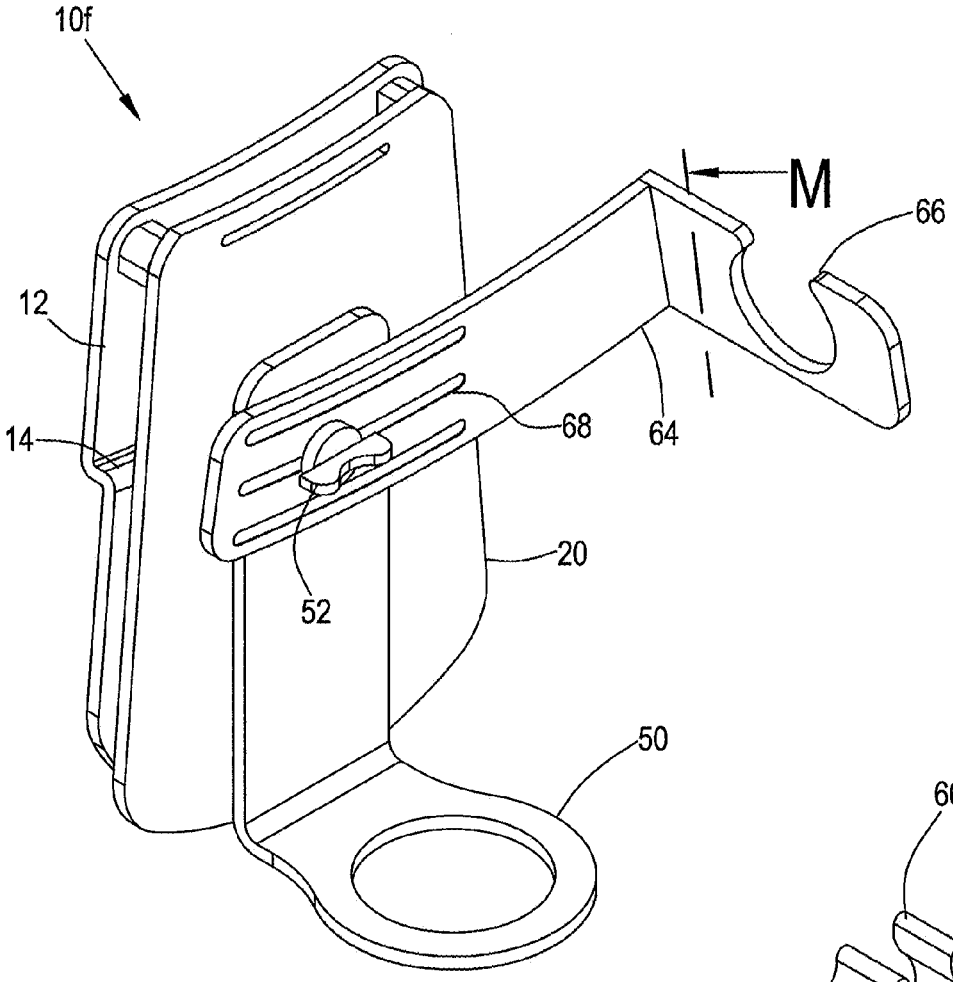


FIG. 9A

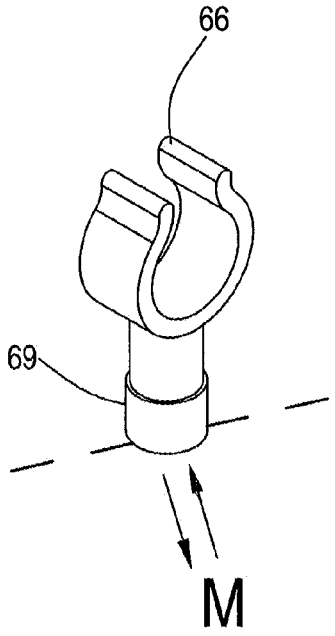


FIG. 9B

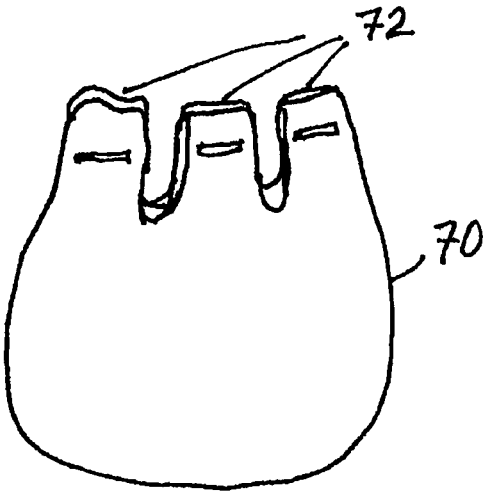


Fig. 10A

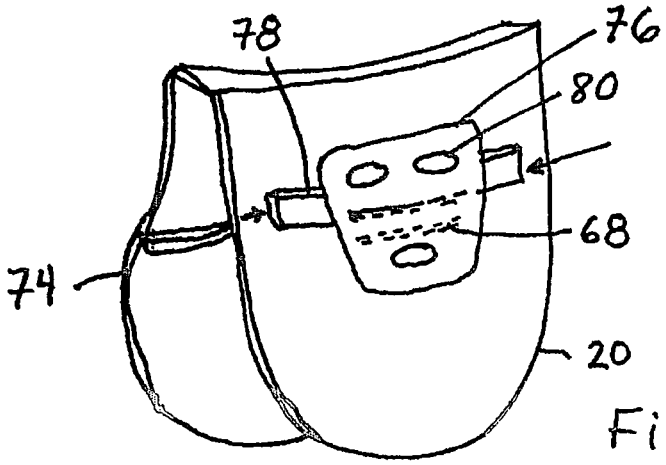


Fig. 10B

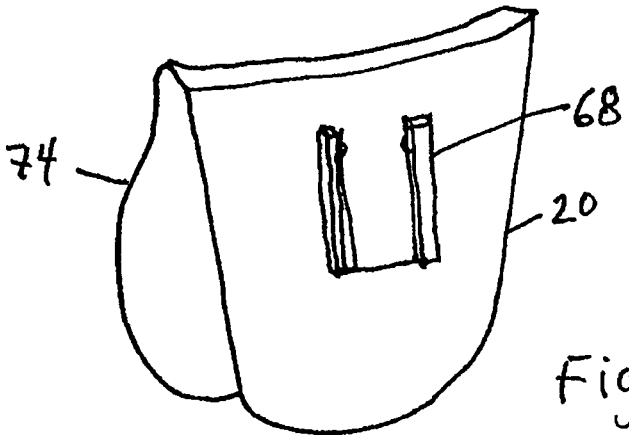


Fig. 10C

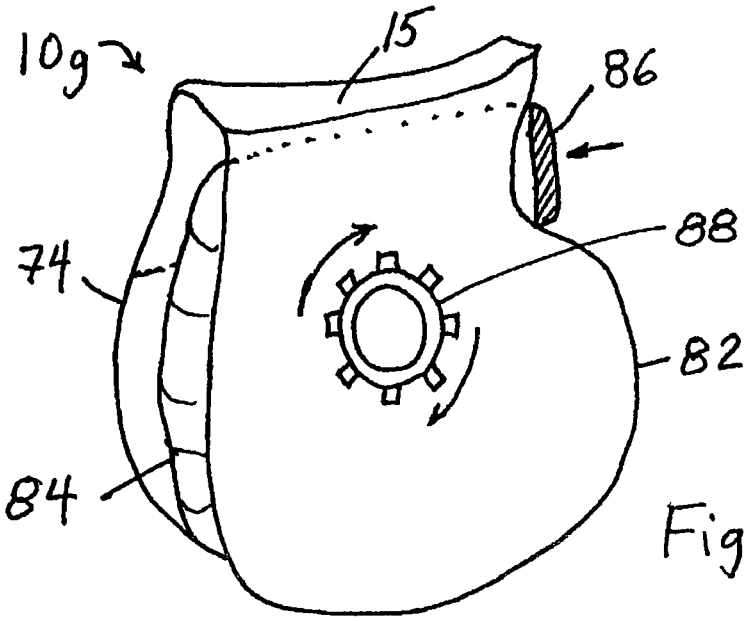


Fig. 11A

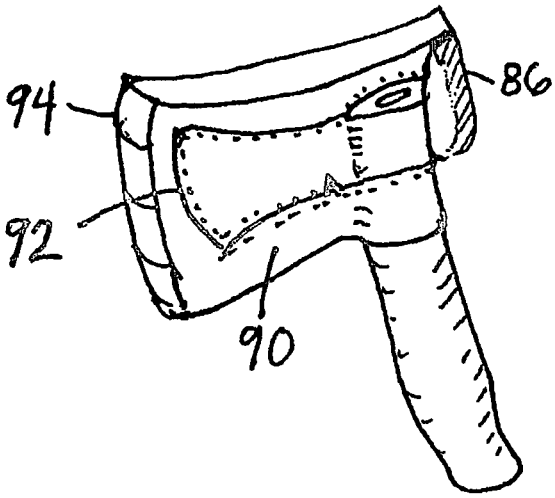


Fig. 11B

TOOL HOLDER UNIT

CROSS-REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a national stage entry of PCT/IL04/00207, filed Mar. 3, 2004, which claims priority from Provisional Application 60/450,647, filed Mar. 3, 2003.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates generally to tool holders, and more specifically, to tool holder units for attachment to a user's belt.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

A workman's ability to access tools while working on a job is a known problem. In this text, the word "user" defines a workman, maintenance man, etc. as one who uses a tool to accomplish construction, assembly, disassembly, crafts or repair tasks and the like.

Numerous solutions to the problem of tool accessibility have been suggested by prior art devices. In some of these solutions, a belt is provided with a set configuration of tool compartments which the user wears over his existing belt and which cannot be arranged as the user would prefer. The compartments for specific tools are set in a specific configuration which may not be the configuration desirable for the user. Certain jobs require the use of certain tools preferentially or exclusively over others. Additionally, if the user does not want to carry his full set of tools with him, he must remove them from the belt and store them elsewhere, later returning them to their appropriate compartment on the belt. It may be that the tools needed for a specific job are located at an inconvenient place on the belt and are not easily accessible to the user.

Alternatively, the prior art shows individual tool compartment units which can be threaded on to the user's belt in a variety of arrangements. While this allows the user to preferentially arrange the tools on the belt, and choose those necessary for a specific job, it necessitates the user opening his belt and removing it from the belt loops, both to attach the units and to remove them.

Another proposed solution to this problem is a clip-on device to be placed on the user's existing belt. This allows the user to attach and detach the unit without removing the belt. This is well known for cellular phone users. However, often the clip is easily displaced from the belt when the user changes position, e.g., sits down, as upward force on the clip holder causes it to rise and disengage from the belt. This problem is accentuated by the fact that many tools are wider and longer than a cellular phone causing more displacement problems due to the user's movements.

Prior art U.S. Pat. No. 5,240,156 to Sicotte et al. discloses a modular component system which provides a specially formed belt for attaching various compartments. However, it is not suited to tool use, as the attachments are formed by the use of a provided belt covered in loops to which the attachments units stick by way of hooks, such as those provided by VELCRO™. This would not be suitable for use with tools which can be heavy, such as cordless drills, mallets etc., as the attachment units could easily become detached from the belt, causing a safety risk to the user and damage to the tools. Additionally, the attachment units can only be used with the specific belt provided with the attachments, thus limiting the user.

Thus, it would be desirable to provide a tool holder which can be attached and detached without the removal of the user's belt, would allow the user to choose which tool units to attach to the belt and in what arrangement, and which would sit securely on the user's belt without fear of displacement due to the user's movements.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Accordingly, it is a broad object of the present invention to overcome the problems of the prior art and provide a series of tool holder units which can be attached singly or in multiples to a user's belt in any desired arrangement, without the necessity of undoing the belt and which can be secured to the belt in a way which does not allow displacement.

In accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention, there is provided a tool holder unit for attachment to a user's belt, the tool holder unit comprising:

- an ergonomically-shaped base;
- an ergonomically-shaped front section attached at its top end to the ergonomically-shaped base, the ergonomically-shaped front section having means for insertion of at least one of a tool and tool accessories; and
- means for securing a user's belt between the ergonomically-shaped base and the ergonomically-shaped front section, such that the tool holder unit does not become displaced from the user's belt due to body motion by the user.

The tool holder unit of the present invention may be adapted to hold a variety of tools and/or accessories as necessary for the user. The tool holder unit is comprised of an ergonomically-shaped base which clips behind the user's belt, and a similarly ergonomically-shaped front section which sits in front of the user's belt. The ergonomic curve of the base, which is matched to the ergonomic curve of the front section, prevents displacement.

Additionally, the unit is further secured by a device for attaching the holder to the belt. This securing device provides ease of mounting and dismounting from the user's belt without need for opening the belt or removing the belt from the belt loops of the pants, while at the same time assuring that the holder is securely attached and will not accidentally become knocked off the user's belt. This securing device can take the form of a channel in which the belt sits, or teeth which snag under the user's belt. These two features prevent the unit from being knocked off the user's belt when the user changes positions, e.g. when the user sits down.

The front section of the tool holder unit is provided with holder means for holding or containing a tool or tools or accessories. A series of different adaptations is envisioned providing the user with the ability to select the necessary holder units and easily switch between various tool holder units according to the needs of the job. This modularity provides the user with the ability to carry only those tools which he needs and not carry a tool belt full of attachments and tools which he does not need at the time.

Those units which are not in use may be stored with the tools in them for later use. At least one hole is provided in the base of the unit to allow the holder unit, with or without the tool, to be hung from a typical peg board, such as those known for use in storing tools, such that it is conveniently available for immediate use.

Various tool holder units can be provided for containing different types of tools and accessories, the following list not being exclusive.

In one embodiment of the present invention, a unit is provided in which the front section has a holder for a hammer and

a tape measure. The holder for the hammer consists of a ring extending from the lower side of the front section of the holder and having formed therein a semicircular opening for inserting a handle of a hammer, a mallet or similarly shaped tool. A slot for inserting the clip of a standard tape measure device is included above the hammer holder for the convenience of the user.

In another embodiment of the present invention, the unit is provided with a hook extending outward from the front section, which can be useful in holding a variety of tools and accessories, including a drill. The hook may be provided with a flexible strap for closing around the tool being held by the hook for further safety. Additionally the strap can prevent the hook from accidentally catching on obstacles, such as clothing, by mistake. When not in use, the strap can be attached to the front section so it is held securely in place and does not get in the way of the user.

In yet another embodiment, there is provided a holder unit for shears or clippers, in which there is attached to the front section a pocket for holding them or similar tools. The pocket is generally scissors-shaped and may be provided with at least one flange, preferably made of rubber, extending interior to the pocket for snagging the inserted tool such that the tool does not fall out when the user changes positions, e.g., bends over. In a preferred embodiment of the invention, the pocket is constructed of one piece, but it may be provided in other forms, such as separate straps, or have at least one opening in the middle. The pocket is made of any suitable material, such as rubber, plastic, and the like.

In a further embodiment of the present invention, there is provided a water-proof container for storage of items which are susceptible to damage by water, e.g., a cellular phone, a camera, and a PDA. This can be helpful both for the workman in an outdoor situation where rain may occur, or on jobs where water lines are involved, and also in other work situations in close proximity to water. The container is provided with a secured latch so as to prevent accidental opening. Additionally, the container opens to an approximately 60° angle so as to prevent the contents of the container from accidentally spilling when opened.

In yet a further embodiment of the invention, there is provided a tool holder unit for a cordless tool, which provides for its use by either right or left-handed users. In this embodiment, the front section of the tool holder unit has a lower end extension in the form of an open loop for inserting the cordless tool. Additionally, the front section is formed with a hole for rotatably attaching an arm ending in a cuff for holding the handle of the cordless tool. The hook may be provided with a mechanism for securing the handle in place in the form of a sliding closure or a flexible strap. The arm ending in a cuff may be supplied in either a right- or left-hand configuration for insertion into the hole in the front section.

In still another embodiment of the invention, the rotatable arm is provided with an S-shaped piece at the end of the arm such that a left- and right-handed solution is provided by rotating the arm to extend either to the left or right side of the tool holder unit and using whichever of the curves of the "S" is open upward to hold the handle of the cordless tool.

Alternatively, the rotatably attached arm is formed without a cuff and a U-shaped attachment is provided which is attachable to the rotatably attached arm in a sliding fashion, providing alternate sites of attachment so as to be adjustable to right- or left-handed users. In this embodiment, a flexible strap is attached to the U-shaped piece to secure the handle of the cordless tool in place.

In yet another embodiment of the invention, the cordless tool is seated in a pocket formed by a cover attached to the front section of the tool holder unit and provided with two V-shaped slots formed at the points of attachment of the cover at the open top end. The cordless tool is inserted into the pocket while the handle of the cordless tool extends out through either of the V-shaped slots, depending on the user's right- or left-handed orientation. Optionally, the cover is provided with an attachable pouch for containing drill bits or the like.

In still a further embodiment of the invention, a tool holder unit is provided with a pouch attached to the front section for holding small accessories such as the user may need, including drill bits, nails, screws, arts and crafts type items, and the like. Preferably, the pouch is made of plastic, although any suitable material may be used.

In a further embodiment of the invention, there is provided a tool holder unit with a pouch containing several compartments for insertion of small tools such as screwdrivers, arts and crafts tools, pens and pencils, and the like.

Additional features and advantages of the invention will become apparent from the following drawings and description.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a better understanding of the invention with regard to the embodiments thereof, reference is made to the accompanying drawings, not to scale, in which like numerals designate corresponding sections or elements throughout, and in which:

FIG. **1** is a perspective view of the back of the base of a tool holder unit in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. **2** is a perspective view of the front of a hammer and tape measure unit in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. **3** is a perspective view of the front of a shears unit in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. **4** is a perspective view of a hook unit in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. **5** is a perspective view of a hook and strap unit in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. **6** is a perspective view of a closed storage container unit in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. **7** is a perspective view of the storage container unit of FIG. **6** shown in an opened condition;

FIG. **8** is perspective view of the cuff embodiment of the cordless tool unit of the present invention;

FIGS. **9**A and **9**B are, respectively, a perspective view and a detail, of another embodiment of the invention for holding cordless type hand tools;

FIGS. **10**A, **10**B, and **10**C are general views of variations on a further embodiment of the invention; and

FIGS. **11**A and **11**B are, respectively, a general view and a detail, of an embodiment of the invention for holding heavy hand-tools mounted on stocks.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Referring now to FIG. **1**, there is seen the tool holder unit **10** drawn as seen from the back of base **12**. Base **12** is disposed in proximity to a user's body and is formed with step **14** for securing the user's belt (not shown). Base **12**, together with front section **20**, forms channel **16**. Base **12** is attached at its top end **15** to front section **20**. The user's belt sits in channel **16**, and is prevented from displacement from upward pressure by step **14**; and from downward pressure by top end **15** which serves as a spacer between base **12** and front section **12**. Base **12** is provided with an ergonomic curve so as to closely match the user's body shape and further prevent the unit from jutting out and thereby catching and causing dis-

placement. Holes **18** are provided for hanging the unit on a peg board or the like when not in use. In an alternative embodiment of the invention (not shown), instead of step **14** and channel **16** for securing the belt, base **12** is provided at its middle with small, teeth-like grips for snagging the bottom edge of the user's belt and preventing upward displacement.

Front section **20** may be provided with a variety of tool holder arrangements, such as the hammer and tape measure holder unit **10***a* shown in FIG. **2**. Unit **10***a* is attached to a belt by sliding the user's belt between base **12** and front section **20** until the belt rests securely above step **14** and below line of attachment **22**, within the space of channel **16**. Unit **10***a* is shown with a tape measure holder **24** provided as a slot for insertion of a standard tape measure clip, and a semicircular strap **26** attached to front section **20** at its distal end for inserting the handle of a hammer, mallet or similarly shaped tool having a stock and head component.

FIG. **3** shows tool holder unit **10***b* designed for holding shears, scissors and similarly shaped tools, including pliers, wire strippers and the like. A generally shear-shaped pocket-like attachment **28** is formed on front section **20**, and may be of one piece (as shown) or formed in strips or with holes (not shown). Optionally, pocket-like attachment **28** may be provided with at least one flexible flange interior to attachment **28** which helps to snag an inserted tool so as to prevent an inserted tool from falling out of attachment **28** upon movement of the user (not shown).

FIG. **4** shows tool holder unit **10***c* wherein front section **20** is adapted to accommodate hook **30** formed thereon. Hook **30** is appropriately sized for holding a cordless tool such as a cordless drill or the like. Hook **30** is attached to front section **20** by track **32**, which provides an adjustment means for adjusting the position of a tool sitting at rest within tool holder unit **10***c* to comfortably match the leg height of a user.

As shown in FIG. **5**, tool holder unit **10***c* may be provided with an optional flexible strap **34** for adjustable attachment to a modified hook **30** using strap holes **36**. When not in use, strap **34** may be clipped into track **32** by securing it behind pins **38**, so that strap **34** will not be in the way and inadvertently catch on anything. The tip of hook **30** is modified by the addition of a bend **40** for insertion through strap holes **36**.

In FIG. **6**, there is shown tool holder unit **10***d* comprising a water-proof container **42** for storage of items which can be damaged by water, e.g., a cellular phone, a camera, and a PDA. This can be helpful both for the workman in a situation where rain or water lines are involved, and also in other water-threatening situations such as in close proximity to a body of water. The water-proof container **42** is provided with a secured latch **44** so as to prevent accidental opening. Opening is accomplished by means of press-tab **46** so that opening is a conscious motion.

As shown in FIG. **7**, the container opens on hinge **48** to an approximately 60° angle so as to prevent the contents of the container from accidentally spilling upon opening of the container. To re-close container **42**, secured latch **44** is inserted into latch hole **49** in a clicking motion.

FIG. **8** shows one of a variety of options for tool holder unit **10***e* for use with cordless hand-held tools. Front section **20** is formed with a lower-end extension having formed therein a loop **50** for insertion of an end of a cordless tool. Front section **20** is additionally formed with an attachment mechanism **52** for rotatable attachment to arm **54** such that when not in use, arm **54** may be extended downward along the length of front section **20** so as to be out of the way. Additionally, arm **54** may be provided with a cuff-shaped end, cuff **56**, for supporting a handle (not shown) of the cordless tool. The handle may be secured into cuff **56** by a sliding mechanism **58**, which retracts into track **60**. Sliding mechanism **58** is provided with tab **62** for one-handed ease of opening and closing.

Alternatively, a flexible strap (not shown, see FIG. **5**) is provided for securing the handle into cuff **56**. The user may choose between an arm **54** with cuff **56** which is suitable for use by right- or left-handed users and attach the appropriate arm **54** to attachment mechanism **52** by any means as is known to those skilled in the art.

In an alternative embodiment (not shown) to tool holder unit **10***e*, arm **54** may be provided with an "S"-shaped end such that when arm **54** is rotated around rotatable attachment mechanism **52**, the curves of the "S" provide support to the handle of the cordless tool in a configuration appropriate for either right or left-handed use.

In a further embodiment (not shown) of tool holder unit **10***e*, arm **54** is provided with a separate "U"-shaped end for slidable attachment by either extension of the "U" so as to provide either left or right-handed use. Arm **54** is then rotated in the desired direction. A flexible strap may be further attached for securing the handle of the cordless tool in place.

In yet another embodiment (not shown) of tool holder unit **10***e*, loop **50** is replaced by a pocket-like structure being attached part way such that there are slits at the upper edge of connection between the pocket and front section **20** on both the left and right sides of the pocket. These slits allow for the extension of the handle of a power tool to either side to provide either a left- or right-handed orientation.

FIG. **9**A is another embodiment of a tool holder unit **10***f* similar to that in FIG. **8**, but a reversible attachable arm **64** replaces both the arm **54** and cuff **56** of FIG. **8**. Arm **64** is provided with a slotted tool neck-rest **66** which accommodates a portable cordless electric tool (not shown) oriented such that the forward active part thereof is seated firmly in loop **50**. The tool neck-rest **66** optionally is a separate, flexible, snap-on feature as shown in FIG. **9**B connected to the end of arm **64** at a point marked M by an adapter **69** fitted to a matching connector (not shown) on arm **64** at point M. This allows for various neck sizes of tools to be supported in neck-rest **66**. Arm **64** is attachable by rotatable attachment mechanism **52** and is connected in either a left- or right-handed orientation to tool holder unit **10***f* on front section **20**.

In a preferred embodiment of the invention, arm **64** is fixed by insertion into slider rails **68**, but other methods of attachment, as is well known by those skilled in the art, may be utilized. The mounting height of the reversibly attachable arm **64** is adjustable by aligning the slider rails **68** with higher or lower matching grooves formed on both sides of arm **64** for convenient left- and right-hand orientation of arm **64**. Slider rails **68** can be adjusted for the width of a tool handle when arm **64** is rotated to a desired angle or horizontally. In manufacture, the ergonomically curved base **12** is formed together with front section **20** as one piece, but optionally, they may also be made as separate parts and assembled to form the tool holder unit **10***f*.

FIG. **10**A is a view of an alternate embodiment of the invention. Base **70** is a single body section with finger-like extensions **72** which are spaced-apart to accommodate wider tool holder units as well as wider detachable pockets/pouches for small tools and/or accessories and parts.

FIG. **10**B is yet another embodiment of the invention illustrating a base **74** formed, in a preferred embodiment thereof, as a single piece together with a docking and locking flap **76** mounted on front section **20**. In the embodiment shown, flap **76** is provided with a quick-release mechanism **78**, such as a spring-release mechanism operated by squeezing the tabs (marked by arrows), which operates a connecting means **80**, such as a series of oval-shaped perforations as illustrated by

way of example. A cordless, hand-held, electric tool, as well as part-pouches containing small tools and/or parts are attached to connecting means **80** utilizing matching protuberances formed on an attaching surface of a pouch or tool holder unit. The quick-release mechanism **78** locks them into place and holds them securely.

FIG. **10**C is a further embodiment of the invention utilizing vertically disposed slider rails **68** as heretofore described. The slider rails **68** also enable quick attachment of various-sized hand tools to front section **20** of a tool holder unit in a manner similar to that of the connection of hook **30** as in FIG. **4**. The slider rails **68** can be formed together with front section **20**, or alternatively, made as separate parts to be joined after manufacture. It should be noted that the parts comprising tool holder units in general are made of any suitable, semi-rigid material, such as polymer plastic, heavy-duty rubber, leather, and the like, as is known to those skilled in the art, but in a preferred embodiment of the invention, are injection-molded plastic.

FIGS. **11**A and **11**B are views of yet another embodiment of the invention. In FIG. **11**A is shown an ergonomically-shaped base **74** of a tool holding unit **10***g* shaped to fit the body of a user. A front section **82** shaped as a flap is connected at an upper section **15** to base **74**. The middle section **84** formed between base **74** and front section **82** is designed to be sufficiently wide so as to accommodate the head of a heavy, hand tool mounted on a stock, such as a hatchet head **92**, together with a protective blade sheath **94** which safely holds the sharp hatchet head **92** in the plenum **90**, as shown in FIG. **11**B. Note that the stock of the tool extends outside the blade sheath **94**, but because it is short, it is not restrained in a loop or strap as in prior embodiments heretofore described, although this is optional. The hatchet head **92** is inserted and then locked into the middle section **84** by depressing a safety, push-button **86** which pops out to retain the inserted blade sheath **94** and hatchet head **92**. To release the tool, push-button **86** must be depressed once again. A ratchet mechanism **88** on the outside face of front section **82** provides for rotating the whole middle section **84** a few degrees of arc in order to remove the tool stored therein at a safe-removal angle in relation to the body of a user. Push-button **86** provides a second level of safety protection in removal of sharp tools.

The above list is only a partial list of the possible tool holder units which could be described based on the inventive concept of a tool holder unit comprised of an ergonomic base attached at its top end to an ergonomic front section, the ergonomic base having means to secure a user's belt in place to prevent displacement.

Having described the invention with regard to certain specific embodiments thereof, it is to be understood that the description is not meant as a limitation, since further modifications will now suggest themselves to those skilled in the art, and it is intended to cover such modifications as fall within the scope of the appended claims.

The invention claimed is:

1. A tool holder unit for attachment to a user's belt, said tool holder unit comprising:

an ergonomically-shaped base;

an ergonomically-shaped front section attached at its top end to said ergonomically-shaped base, said ergonomically-shaped front section having means for insertion of at least one of a tool and tool accessories,

wherein said means for insertion of at least one of a tool and tool accessories comprises a rotatably attachable arm rotatable to a desired angle in the same plane as that of said front section and at least one structure selected from the group:

a. a pocket;

b. a semi-circular strap;

c. a scissors-like pouch;

d. a hook; and

e. a cuff and loop,

wherein said rotatably attachable arm comprises a reversible arm to accommodate at least one of a left-and right-handed use,

wherein said reversible arm is attached to said front section by a connection means comprising slider rails for enabling width adjustment at said desired angle to accommodate a handle of said tool, and

a securing means for securing a user's belt between said ergonomically-shaped base and said ergonomically-shaped front section, such that said tool holder unit does not become displaced from the user's belt due to body motion by the user.

2. The tool holder unit of claim **1** wherein said securing means comprises a step formed in said ergonomically-shaped base for preventing displacement of said tool holder unit from the belt of a user.

3. The tool holder unit of claim **2** wherein said securing means comprises a channel formed between said ergonomically-shaped base and said ergonomically-shaped front piece to accommodate the belt of a user, said belt being fixed therein without necessitating removal from the body of a user.

4. The tool holder unit of claim **2** wherein said step comprises an offset fold formed in the plane of the material of said ergonomically-shaped base such that when subjected to upward pressure, said base is retained in a fixed position relative to the body motion of a user.

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